

September 13, 2013

## **A Plea to the F.C.C.**

### **Change the rules to no longer distinguish between on-campus and off-campus Internet access.**

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President Obama's ConnectED Initiative – a directive to the F.C.C. – is a game-changing opportunity to bring America's schools into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Connecting all of America's schools and classrooms to a high-speed network is absolutely key. We, the under-signers, have been writing about the need for F.C.C. action for some time now<sup>1</sup>. We are excited to see that action is about to be taken. **BUT, we urge the F.C.C. to go one step further: allow e-Rate funds to be used to support off-campus as well as on-campus Internet access.**

The Age of Mobilism is upon us. Wireless connectivity is the key catalyst that powers this new and exciting age. While those physical wires – from the telegraph wires of Samuel Morse to the fiber cable of today – have served us well in linking us all together, today those wires are a limitation, a reminder of a bygone era. Wireless transmission is the key to unlocking all our futures in this new, the Age of Mobilism.

Unfortunately, there are many in America who are not able to access wireless connectivity and participate in the Age of Mobilism. The Digital Divide is alive and well in America; it is preventing the have-nots from taking advantage of America's growing wireless infrastructure.

- The number of children receiving free and reduced lunch continues, year-after-year to increase. "Of the five billion meals provided to 31 million students during the 2011-12 school year<sup>2</sup>, 59 percent were free of charge, 9 percent were reduced price, and the other 33 percent were paid."<sup>3</sup>
- "Based on wage figures, half of Americans are in or near poverty."<sup>4</sup>

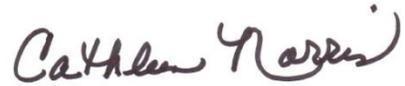
This is America; this is the Land of Opportunity. This is a crying shame.

But the good news is this: the F.C.C. can do something about this absolutely appalling situation: change the rule so that wireless Internet access, available to the students while they are on-campus at school, is also available while the children are off-campus, in their apartments and homes.

Indeed, the distinction between on-campus and off-campus made sense during the "telegraph" era. But, we have entered the Age of Mobilism, where location is increasingly less relevant for teaching and learning, in particular. The term anytime, anywhere learning is popular; but a better way of saying that is this: children learn all the time, everywhere. And the data<sup>5,6</sup> suggest, that all-the-time, everywhere learning is greatly facilitated when a child uses a handheld, wirelessly-connected mobile device.

We urge the F.C.C. to update its rules to reflect the current times: wires are out, wireless is in. We must equip today's children with the key to their future. We must level the playing field for the "have-not" children who don't have the Internet readily available in their homes. **We urge the F.C.C. to change its rules and no longer distinguish between on-campus and off-campus Internet access and thus allow e-Rate funds to provide children wireless access to the Internet: all-the-time, everywhere.**

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- <sup>1</sup> <http://thejournal.com/articles/2013/08/26/way-to-go.aspx>  
<http://thejournal.com/articles/2013/07/10/connected-take-2.aspx>  
<http://thejournal.com/articles/2013/06/12/connected.aspx>  
<http://thejournal.com/articles/2013/04/11/the-10-wireless-plan-2-game-changing-but-simple-proposals.aspx>  
<http://thejournal.com/articles/2013/03/25/fcc-must-act.aspx>  
<http://www.districtadministration.com/article/america%E2%80%99s-school-children-need-practice-democracy-and-freedom-247>
- <sup>2</sup> <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/slsummar.htm>
- <sup>3</sup> <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/slsummar.htm>
- <sup>4</sup> [http://www.salon.com/2013/05/30/half\\_of\\_americans\\_living\\_below\\_or\\_near\\_poverty\\_line\\_partner/](http://www.salon.com/2013/05/30/half_of_americans_living_below_or_near_poverty_line_partner/)
- <sup>5</sup> <http://thenextweb.com/insider/2011/05/14/how-the-internet-is-revolutionizing-education/>
- <sup>6</sup> <http://www.salary.com/the-value-of-online-learning/>